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(54) **MULTI-STAGE PARCEL TRACKING SYSTEM**

**MEHRSTUFIGES PAKETVERFOLGUNGSSYSTEM**

**SYSTEME DE SUIVI DE COLIS MULTIPHASE**

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## Description

### Technical Field

The present invention relates to parcel tracking systems using portable data entry terminals, and more particularly relates to a local parcel tracking system using a hand-held, data entry and processing unit that can perform tracking analysis on data it has collected.

### Background Art

Parcel delivery companies, such as United Parcel Service, have long maintained records to be able to verify deliveries. More recently, such companies have begun to guarantee overnight delivery of parcels, and therefore have a need for rapid access to information verifying on-time delivery, including a record of the signature of the recipient. The word "parcel" is used herein broadly to include any item handled by delivery services, such as packages, letters, containers, or unpackaged items.

Typically, a delivery vehicle driver leaves the vehicle with one or more parcels and a portable data acquisition device, such as the Delivery Information Acquisition Device (DIAD) device used by UPS drivers. The DIAD device includes a bar code scanner for reading a bar code label placed on the parcel by the sender, and a signature capture pad. This information is stored temporarily in the unit, and then transferred via an optical link to a docking station located in the vehicle. From this station, the information is transmitted to a central tracking computer via a cellular telephone network. Other systems use radio frequency (RF) networks to relay tracking information to a central computer.

If the sender or an intended recipient needs to know the status of the parcel, that person can access the information in the central tracking computer either by calling the parcel delivery service or by sending an inquiry from a personal computer linked by modem to the central computer. However, until the tracking information pertaining to a parcel is uploaded from the DIAD into the central computer, it is not accessible to the tracking system. In particular, if the driver delivers several parcels during one foray from the vehicle, the portable acquisition device does not have the capability to provide tracking information contained in its own memory. The information is not available until the driver returns to the vehicle and uploads the information into the central system.

Present parcel delivery tracking systems track parcels only to a customer's mail room, reception desk, or other receiving location. The customer may have a personal computer in communication with the parcel delivery service's central tracking computer to facilitate tracking of parcels sent from or received by the customer's mail room. Between the sender and the mail room of the recipient company, the tracking system may receive data

(such as by scanning a bar code) at several stages of delivery, such as regional and local sorting hubs. However, in many large companies, the further process of delivering a parcel to an individual within the company and verifying such delivery is another major stage in the delivery process. Currently, convenient and automated tracking of such internal deliveries is not available. Nor is the status of the parcel during the internal delivery stage part of the tracking information available through the delivery service's central computer or through personal computer systems in the customer's mail room.

International Business Machines Corporation's European Patent Application 0 565 290 discloses an object tracking system in which parcel tracking information is captured with a hand held intelligent storage device. The storage device captures information regarding the parcel in three ways. First, a touch screen captures a signature. Second, the touch screen captures alpha numeric data by means of a displayed keyboard. Third, the device captures information by means of bar code scanner. Once the information about the parcel is captured in one of those three ways, the information is simply stored and later downloaded either in real time or in batch mode to a central computer system. There is no provision made for querying the hand held device to retrieve information stored about the package prior to downloading to a central system nor is there any provision disclosed for retrieving information from a central computer system for display by the hand held device.

Although prior portable data acquisition terminals have included both bar code scanners and signature capture pads, the scanners have often been built into the unit housing or provided as a wand or point-and-shoot device attached by cable to the terminal, while entry of a signature has required a separate tool in the nature of a stylus. When the scanner is built into the terminal, it may be difficult to maneuver the terminal into the correct orientation to scan a bar code. When a separate wand or the like is attached, the user has the inconvenience of looking after separate tools for scanning and signature entry.

Symbol Technologies, Inc.'s European Patent Application 0 573 018 discloses a number of different types of scanners for scanning bar codes. Particularly, Figures 7, 8, and 9 disclose scanners in the form of a stylus. The styli have transparent tips through which reflected light from a bar code is received. The styli with their transparent tips may be used for inputting data by using light pen technology, capacity contact detection circuitry, pressure sensitive contact, ultrasonic proximity detection circuitry, etc.

Thus, there has been a need for a parcel tracking system that can track parcels during the internal stage of delivery after receipt of the parcel from a parcel delivery service, using an efficient device that can obtain signatures of recipients and scan codes printed on parcel labels, and can respond to tracking inquiries prior to transferring collected information to a different compu-

ter.

### Summary of the Invention

The present invention as claimed meets the above-described need in the art by providing a delivery tracking system capable of tracking parcels during an internal stage of delivery within an organization after receipt of the parcel from a parcel delivery service. The system utilizes an intelligent, hand-held, portable data entry and data processing device to obtain signatures of recipients and scan codes printed on parcel labels, and to respond to tracking inquiries prior to transferring collected information to a different computer.

Generally described, the present invention provides an electronic parcel tracking system for use by an organization, comprising an intelligent hand-held, portable data entry and data processing device, which includes a wand-mounted symbol reader, a data entry and display screen capable of receiving and displaying information, including signature information, input by contact with the screen, an information storage device, a data transfer device, and a processor connected to the reader, the screen, the storage device, and the data transfer device. The processor is configured to associate and store in the information storage device data related to a particular parcel, including symbol information read by the reader, signature information acquired by the screen, and keyed information acquired by the screen, and to respond to queries about the particular parcel entered via the screen by displaying the data associated with the parcel.

Preferably, the data transfer device is selectively operable to transfer information from the information storage device to a personal computer system located at a parcel receiving location of the organization. Also, the portable data entry device may be equipped with a modem for transferring information related to a particular parcel between the information storage device and a central computer system located at a parcel delivery firm.

In the context of multi-stage parcel delivery, the present invention might typically be used as follows. A parcel dropped at a mail room or other receiving location of an organization may be logged into a portable data entry and data processing device, such as a personal digital assistant (PDA), equipped with a wand-mounted bar code reader. Logging in may be accomplished by scanning a bar code, keying in information using the data entry screen of the PDA, or downloading information from another device via a cable or an optical link. The parcel information is stored in memory in the PDA. For the internal stage of delivery, a mail room clerk or other person takes the parcel to the intended recipient or arranges for the recipient to pick up the parcel. Upon this delivery, the clerk checks out the parcel, preferably by scanning the bar code again with the wand scanner, and then having the recipient sign the screen of the PDA us-

ing the wand as a stylus.

The PDA is programmed to allow the clerk to obtain tracking information from the PDA memory by date, by time, by tracking identification number, by name of recipient, or by destination location of the intended recipient. The PDA will display the location of the parcel as well as its "scan history" within the organization and, by modem communication with a central tracking computer of the parcel delivery firm, its history prior to receipt at the mail room. At the end of a selected period of time, such as daily, the information file accumulated within the PDA memory is loaded up into an on-site personal computer (PC) using a communications interface, such as a wireless infrared link. The PC may be used to consolidate information gathered by multiple PDAs, to search for tracking information, and to display captured signatures. Many variations of the foregoing procedure are possible.

Thus, the present invention provides an improved portable parcel tracking system including an intelligent hand-held, portable data entry and data processing device for parcel tracking, capable of responding to tracking queries using information acquired by and stored in the device. The data processing device of the present invention is capable of sharing tracking data with remote computers. Other advantages of the present invention will become apparent upon examining the following description of preferred embodiments of the invention, when taken in conjunction with the drawings and the appended claims.

### Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a block diagram of a parcel tracking system embodying the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a diagrammatic front plan view of a portable data entry and data processing device utilized in the system of Fig. 1.

Fig. 3 is flow diagram showing the sequence of steps of the operation of a system embodying the present invention.

Fig. 4A-4F is a sequence of screens of the portable data entry and data processing device observed during parcel check-in.

Fig. 5A-5F is a sequence of screens of the portable data entry and data processing device observed during parcel check-out.

Fig. 6 is a flow diagram outlining the steps of the technique of the present invention for entering and responding to a tracking query.

Fig. 7A-7F is a sequence of screens of the portable data entry and data processing device observed during an internal tracking query.

Fig. 8A-8F is a sequence of screens of the portable data entry and data processing device observed during use of utilities related to tracking management.

Fig. 9A is a main menu screen of the mail room PC to which data is downloaded from the portable data entry

and data processing device.

Fig. 9B is a screen of the mail room PC showing data transfer activity.

Fig. 10A is a report selection screen of the mail room PC.

Fig. 10B is a screen of the mail room PC showing a listing of checked-out parcels.

#### Detailed Description

Referring now in more detail to the drawings, in which like numerals refer to like parts throughout the several views, Fig. 1 shows a parcel tracking system 10 embodying the present invention in block diagram form. Referring to Figs. 1 and 2, the system 10 includes an intelligent, hand-held, portable data entry and data processing device 12, of the type known as a personal digital assistant (PDA). The PDA 12 includes a touch-sensitive data entry and display screen 14 capable of interpreting handwriting and of defining button or key areas 15. For example, the screen may display a typewriter keyboard, a numeric keypad, or buttons programmed to allow a user to cause certain operations to occur. A cursor controller 16 mounted on the housing of the PDA enables movement of a cursor on the screen 14 by manual manipulation of the controller 16 in a known manner. A preferred PDA for use in connection with the present invention is model Z-7000 manufactured by Casio.

The PDA 12 includes a processor or CPU 17 which is operative to control various devices within the PDA. The processor 17 is connected to a screen driver circuit 14a, which operates the data acquisition and display functions of the screen 14. The processor also is connected to a memory device 18, which may be RAM (protected by a battery back up), a removable memory card, or other memory capable of use with a PDA. An input/output (I/O) circuit 20, connected to the processor 17, controls communications between the PDA and external devices through a modem 22, an infrared port 23, and a wand scanner 25. The modem may be an internal modem or a plug-in peripheral type, and preferably is a model XJACK fax modem card by Megahertz. The infrared port 23 is a known device commonly built into PDAs for communication with other PDAs and PCs.

The wand scanner 25 is preferably a model Scanteam 6180 by Welch Allyn. The scanner 25 includes a light source and detector for reading bar codes as the tip 25 of the wand is swept across a bar code 30 as shown in Fig. 2. The tip 25 is made of hard, transparent glass or plastic to withstand repeated drawing across surfaces on which bar codes have been printed. The scanner 25 also includes within the wand a detector for detecting the light reflected from the bar code 30 and circuitry for decoding the detector output. A resulting signal containing the contents of the bar code 30 is transmitted to the I/O circuit 20 via a cable 27 plugged into a communications port of the PDA. The wand scanner may require a battery pack (not shown) for operating

power. The battery pack can be attached to the PDA 12.

The system 10 also may include a portable data acquisition device 35, such as a UPS DIAD device. The DIAD device incorporates an optical data port 37, which can transmit data to a compatible peripheral optical data port 38 that is plugged into a communications port of the PDA 12. Other portable data acquisition devices can be used, and they may be interfaced to an RS-232 port of the PDA in a conventional manner for data transfer with the PDA by known means, such as cable, RF link, infrared link, or optical link.

The system 10 may further include a personal computer 40 or other computer equipped with an infrared port 42 compatible with the infrared port 23 of the PDA 12. The infrared port 42 is preferably that sold by AST. The principal use of this infrared link in the present invention is to upload tracking information acquired by the PDA into the PC 40. The PC 40 then can be used as a station to search for or print parcel delivery status information. With appropriate programming of the PC 40 and PDA 12, information can be downloaded from the PC into the memory 18 of the PDA. As alternatives to the infrared port, data communication between the PC and the PDA may be over known means, such as cable, RF link, infrared link, or optical link.

As also shown in Fig. 1, the PDA 12 may be connected to a remote central tracking computer 45 via normal or cellular telephone lines using the modem 22 and a compatible modem in the computer 45. In this way the PDA can access tracking information stored in the central computer 45 and can receive such information from the computer 45.

A printer 48 may be included in the system and selectively connected to the PC 40 or the PDA 12 by appropriate cables.

In addition to being used to scan bar codes, the wand 25 also is used to enter data via the touch-sensitive screen 14. This is done by engaging the tip 26 of the wand against the screen to enter data either by pressing buttons or keys 15 defined by the screen display, or by writing on the screen. In particular, a recipient of a parcel may use the wand to enter his or her signature into the PDA to verify receipt of the parcel. The signature information is stored in the memory 18 and is associated with other information related to the same package, such as a tracking identification number obtained by scanning the bar code 30. A system according to the present invention needs no stylus in addition to the wand 25.

Fig. 3 shows diagrammatically an overview of the operation of the parcel tracking system 10, while Figs 4-7 show more details of the sequence of steps involved. At block 301 of Fig. 3, an employee of a parcel delivery service, such as the driver of a vehicle 300, drops off one or more parcels, packages, or letters at a mail room of a company that is a customer of the parcel delivery service. A customer employee at the site, referred to herein as a "clerk," operates the PDA to check

in the items in one of two ways: (1) by scanning a bar code 30 on the item using the wand 25, or (2) by downloading the tracking information relating to the items into the PDA memory from the driver's portable data acquisition device, such as the DIAD device shown. The downloaded information may include a tracking identification number, the identity of the sender, the identity of the intended recipient, and the "scan history" of the item, namely, a list of the stations or hubs along the item's route at which the parcel delivery service scanned the bar code on the item. The downloading check-in alternative (2) will be used more often when a large number of parcels are delivered to the mail room.

The information obtained from scanning the bar code 30 according to the wand check-in alternative (1) will generally be the tracking number, which can be used to access other tracking information stored in the central tracking computer 45. The tracking number of the parcel is associated in the memory 18 with the date and time the parcel is checked in. Fig. 4 shows the sequence of PDA screens which appear during the check-in procedure. Viewing the main menu screen of Fig. 4A, the clerk "clicks" on the button "Check in Packages" or touches the button with the wand tip 26. A screen appears as in Fig. 4B, displaying a menu for selecting either "Scanner Input" or "DIAD Input". If "Scanner Input" is tapped, a new screen appears as in Fig. 4C with an instruction to scan in any new packages and a message that the PDA is ready to scan. When the clerk successfully operates the wand 25 to acquire the bar code information, the tracking number of the parcel is displayed along with the date and time it is checked in, as shown in Fig. 4D. This information is stored in the PDA memory 18. The procedure is closed by tapping the appropriate button on the screen when finished.

If "DIAD Input" is tapped, a DIAD interface screen appears as in Fig. 4E, and the clerk taps a button "DIAD receive mode," to ready the PDA for incoming data. A holding message "Waiting for Data from DIAD" is displayed. When the transfer is complete, a screen appears as in Fig. 4F indicating that a file has been created for the transferred data, the total number of parcels received, the check-in date, and the check-in time. Tapping on a "Done" button returns the clerk to the main menu.

At block 302, distribution of the parcels from the clerk to a recipient occurs. The PDA 12 is conveniently small and light weight and therefore may be carried by a mail clerk on rounds to deliver parcels to recipients at various locations around the organization. At each stop, or at the mail room if the recipient comes to pick up the parcel, the check-out procedure shown in Fig. 5 is carried out. The clerk clicks or touches the button "Check Out" as shown in Fig. 5A, and a screen is displayed as in Fig. 5B instructing the user to scan the packages to be checked out. When the clerk scans a bar code 30 using the wand 25, the tracking number of the parcel and the date and time appear on the screen, as in Fig.

5C, and a message is displayed that a package has been added successfully to the list of packages being delivered to a particular recipient. When all of such packages have been scanned, the clerk taps a button to "Continue" and views a screen as in Fig. 5D, with windows for entering the recipient's first and last names and a keyboard display for using the wand tip to tap the name into the window. Or, the screen may present a list (not shown) of possible recipients' names for selection. Such a list may be compiled from the data downloaded into the PDA at check-in. Upon entering the name, a screen as in Fig. 5E appears, presenting the clerk with a list of possible recipient locations. The clerk taps a location and it appears in a window on the screen. The clerk taps "Continue" and the screen of Fig. 5F appears. The clerk hands the PDA to the recipient, who is presented with a list of the parcels that have been delivered, and instructed to sign for them in a window. After the signature is acquired, as shown in Fig. 5F, the recipient taps a "Confirm" button to approve the verifying information and close the check-out routine, and hands the PDA back to the clerk.

Returning to Fig. 3, at block 303 a procedure for making a tracking query is indicated. The tracking procedure is illustrated in more detail in the flow chart of Fig. 6 and the screen sequence of Fig. 7. From the main menu as shown in Fig. 7A, the clerk taps the button "Track Packages" and is presented with a query mode selection screen as in Fig. 7B for selecting "Internal Deliveries," that is, deliveries checked in or out by the PDA 12, or "TotalTrack," which refers to an external tracking database stored in the remote central computer 45. Referring to Fig. 6, upon such entry of the type of query, at block 601, the processor determines which button, internal or external query, has been tapped.

If an internal query has been selected, the clerk is presented with the screen of Fig. 7C and asked to select a query mode: by date, by name of recipient, by tracking number, or by location of intended recipients. The clerk taps the appropriate button on the screen. The clerk then may use the keypad display to enter the desired date, name, or at least the last three digits of the tracking number. If a query by location has been selected, the clerk is presented with a screen as in Fig. 7D containing a list of possible locations. Upon tapping a particular location, it is displayed in a window. The above selection step corresponds to data input block 603 in Fig. 6. After the query mode and request data have been entered, the processor determines which mode has been selected at block 604. If a recipient's name has been entered, at block 605 the processor accesses the memory 18 and retrieves a list of the tracking numbers of parcels that have been signed out to the identified person, sorted by date of delivery, and optionally the signatures associated with each delivery.

If a date has been entered, at block 606 the processor accesses the memory 18 and retrieves a list of the tracking numbers of parcels that have been signed

out on that date, sorted by recipient, and optionally the recipients' signatures. This information may be displayed at block 607 in the manner shown in Fig. 7E. Information that does not fit on the screen 14 may be displayed by scrolling in a known manner.

If a tracking number has been entered, at block 608 the processor accesses the memory 18 and retrieves the date and time the parcel corresponding to the tracking number was signed out, the name of the recipient, and optionally the recipient's signature. The display of the retrieved information on the PDA screen is shown in Fig. 7F.

If a recipient location has been entered, at block 608a the processor accesses the memory 18 and retrieves and displays the dates and times, the recipients' names, and optionally the signatures for all parcels delivered or to be delivered at the selected location.

Thus, tracking information acquired by the PDA 12 can be accessed at any time using the PDA, and particularly can be queried before the PDA memory has been loaded up to another computer. This is an important feature of the invention because it eliminates a period of time during which tracking information acquired and stored in a portable data acquisition device otherwise would not be accessible.

If an external query has been selected, from block 602 in Fig. 6 the logic steps to block 609 for input of a query mode directed to a database file in the central tracking computer 45. Again tracking may be enabled by tracking number, name of sender or recipient, date, or location of sender or recipient (preferably plus the name of an organization). However, appropriate security identification may be required to permit the person making the query to have access, particularly to broad lists by recipient or by date. At block 610, the processor causes the modem 22 to initiate communication with the computer 45. At block 611, the processor determines which query mode has been selected. If a tracking number has been entered, at block 612 the processor accesses the database file in the computer 45 and retrieves the scan history of the parcel associated with the entered tracking number. If a date and an organization have been entered, at block 613 a list of parcels received by the organization on the entered date is retrieved. If a sender's or recipient's name is entered, at block 614 a list of parcels sent by, received by, or in transit to the particular person is retrieved. The capability to retrieve the scan history of each parcel in these lists can be provided.

As indicated in Fig. 6, all query modes lead to block 607 for display or printing of the tracking information retrieved from the memory 18 or the computer 45. The PDA may be connected to the printer 48 in a conventional manner.

Referring again to Fig. 3, block 304 illustrates transfer of the information stored in the PDA memory 18 during distribution to the PC 40 using the infrared ports 23 and 42. The infrared port 42 associated with the PC may

be of the type which intermittently polls a nearby device to determine whether data is ready to be transferred. Setting up the PC to accept data is done by selecting from a main menu shown in Fig. 9A a "File Transfer" routine, which causes the infrared port 42 to begin polling a nearby area. When a PDA is placed in the polling field of the infrared device 42, and a "PC Load" button (not shown) is tapped, the PDA is made ready to transfer data to the PC, but the PDA initially may remain inactive to conserve battery power until the PC "File Transfer" routine is initiated. The PDA infrared port 23 receives the polling signal from the device 42, and responsive to such signal becomes active and sends an identification signal to the PC. The PC then sends a command to initiate data transfer from the PDA memory to the PC. When data transfer is occurring, a screen as shown in Fig. 9B appears on the PC and an animated graphic indicator 44 displays motion in the direction of the data transfer. Transfer of data from the PDA to the PC has dual purposes of consolidating the data files of several PDAs used within an organization and providing information that can be searched at the PC for tracking needs. The printer 48 can be used for hard copy back up.

From the PC main menu screen of Fig. 9A, the user can select a "Reports" menu as shown in the screen of Fig. 10A. Fig. 10B shows a report screen generated by selecting "Checked-Out Listing" from the menu of Fig. 10A. This report, which can be printed using the printer 48, lists, for each parcel tracking number, the date in, time in, date out, time out, recipient name and location, and a display of the recipient's signature. The report "Checked-In Listing" displays the date in, time in, and, if entered or downloaded into the system, the intended recipient's name and location. The reports "Location Listing" and "Recipient Listing" may display the above described information by location or name of recipient, respectively, and indicate the status of parcels which have not yet reached their destination (for example: "not checked out"). Searching may be facilitated by providing lists of possible locations and names from which the user may select the subject of a query. All listings may be printed.

The PDA processor 17 also may carry out a series of utility routines, as shown in Fig. 8. At the main menu, shown in Fig. 8A, the user may tap the "Utilities" button to view a "Utilities Menu" screen as shown in Fig. 8B. The user may then select between "Management Reports," "Site Configuration," "Call Management," and "DB Maintenance." Fig. 8C shows the "Management Reports" screen, from which the user can cause the processor to generate a variety of reports summarizing delivery activity tracked using the PDA 12. Fig. 8D shows the "Configuration" screen from which the user may adjust address and telephone information for the mail room location, and alter the configuration of interfaces with associated devices such as the wand 25, the modem 22, and the printer 48. Fig. 8E shows the "Da-

tabase Maintenance" screen which allows the user to purge or repair the tracking information in the memory 18. Upon tapping the "Purge" button, a screen as in Fig. 8F appears containing all the tracking data in the PDA memory. Using a pull-down menu at the top of the screen, as shown, the user may command the processor to sort the parcels, for example by check-in date and time, by check-out date and time, by shipper, by tracking number, or by status. For example, the user might sort the data by check-out date and time, and then delete all the records older than a selected date.

The functions of the processor 17 and associated devices are controlled by software of a type known to those skilled in the art. Programmers of ordinary skill in the art will be able to provide software to carry out the specific functions described above. Also, the textual instructions and statements presented to the user on the PDA screens may be audibly announced using voice wave files and a voice chip often built into PDAs.

In summary, the present invention provides a tracking system particularly well-suited for an internal stage of parcel delivery within an organization, but also capable of communicating with an external tracking database maintained by the parcel delivery service which delivers parcels to the organization. Within the organization, verification of the location of critical parcels becomes possible, which may be made part of a quality management or security program.

On initial delivery of parcels, the user has the ability to check them into the PDA database using the attached bar code wand scanner or the key entry capabilities of the PDA touch-sensitive screen. On delivery within the organization to the intended recipient, the user has the ability to scan the parcel bar code or enter the recipient's employee number, and to capture the recipient's signature. No separate stylus is required for screen data entry. Delivery information query management allows the user to obtain tracking information by date, by tracking number, or by employee name or number or location. Communication by modem permits further tracking via the delivery service's remote database. Information can be loaded up to a PC for consolidation with similar information from other PDAs. The PC then can be used for tracking, display of signatures, data back up, and printing hard copies of delivery information covering periods of time, such as a day, a week, or a month.

#### Claims

1. An electronic parcel tracking system for use by an organization, comprising:

an intelligent hand-held, portable data entry and data processing device (12), including:

a wand-mounted bar code reader (25);  
a data entry and display screen (14) capa-

ble of receiving information input by contact therewith, including signature information;

an information storage device (18);  
a data transfer device (20); and  
a processor (17) connected to said reader (25), said screen (14), said storage device (18), and said data transfer device (20);  
said processor (17) being configured to associate and store in said information storage device (18) data related to a particular parcel, including bar code information read by said reader (25), signature information acquired by said screen (14), and keyed information acquired by said screen (14),  
said electronic parcel tracking system

characterized in that:

said data entry and display screen (14) is capable of displaying information input by contact therewith; and  
said processor (17) is configured to respond to queries about said particular parcel entered via said screen (14) by displaying said data associated with said parcel prior to transferring information in said information storage device to another computer (40, 45).

2. The system of Claim 1, further comprising a central computer system (45) located at a parcel delivery firm; and wherein said portable data entry device (12) further comprises a modem (22) for transferring information related to said particular parcel between said information storage device (18) and said central computer system (45), said electronic parcel tracking system further characterized in that said processor (17) is configured to respond to queries about said particular parcel entered via said screen (14) by initiating communication with said central computer system (45) via said modem (22), and displaying data associated with said parcel stored in said central computer system (45).
3. The system of Claim 1, wherein said processor (17) is configured to respond to said queries made by name of recipient, by date, by a parcel tracking number, or by destination.
4. A method of tracking a parcel by an organization, comprising the steps of:

entering parcel tracking data into an intelligent hand-held, portable data entry and data processing device (12), including:

a wand-mounted bar code reader (25);

a data entry and display screen (14) capable of receiving information input by contact therewith, including signature information;  
 an information storage device (18);  
 a data transfer device (20); and  
 a processor (17) connected to said reader (25), said screen (14), said storage device (18), and said data transfer device (20);  
 said processor (17) being configured to associate and store in said information storage device (18) parcel tracking data related to a particular parcel, and wherein the step of entering parcel tracking data includes entry of including bar code information read by said reader (25), signature information acquired by said screen (14), and keyed information acquired by said screen (14),

said method characterized by:

entering queries about said particular parcel via said screen (14) after entry of said parcel tracking data and  
 in response to queries about said particular parcel entered via said screen (14), displaying said parcel tracking data prior to transferring information in said information storage device (18) to another computer (40, 45).

5. The method of Claim 4, wherein said portable data entry device (12) further comprises a modem (22) for transferring information related to said particular parcel between said information storage device and a central computer system (45), said method for tracking a parcel being further characterized by entering queries about said particular parcel entered via said screen (14), initiating communication with said central computer system (45) via said modem (22), and displaying parcel tracking data associated with said parcel stored in and received from said central computer system (45).
6. The method of Claim 4, wherein said queries entered via said screen (14) comprise queries made by name of recipient, by date, by a parcel tracking number, or by destination.

#### Patentansprüche

1. Elektronisches Paketverfolgungssystem zur Verwendung durch eine Organisation, das folgendes umfaßt:  
 eine intelligente handgehaltene tragbare Dateneingabe- und Datenverarbeitungsvorrichtung

(12), die folgendes enthält:

ein in einem Lesestift untergebrachtes Strichcodelesegerät (25);  
 einen Dateneingabe- und Displayschirm (14), der durch Kontakt mit ihm eingegebene Informationen, einschließlich Unterschriftsinformationen, empfangen kann;  
 eine Informationsspeichervorrichtung (18);  
 eine Datenübertragungsvorrichtung (20); und  
 einen mit dem Lesegerät (25), dem Schirm (14), der Speichervorrichtung (18) und der Datenübertragungsvorrichtung (20) verbundenen Prozessor (17);  
 wobei der Prozessor (17) ausgelegt ist, um ein bestimmtes Paket betreffende Daten zuzuordnen und in der Informationsspeichervorrichtung (18) zu speichern, einschließlich von dem Lesegerät (25) gelesene Strichcodeinformationen, von dem Schirm (14) erfaßte Unterschriftsinformationen und von dem Schirm (14) erfaßte eingetippte Informationen;  
 wobei das elektronische Paketverfolgungssystem dadurch gekennzeichnet ist, daß  
 der Dateneingabe- und Displayschirm (14) durch Kontakt mit ihm eingegebene Informationen anzeigen kann; und  
 der Prozessor (17) ausgelegt ist, um auf über den Schirm (14) eingegebene Anfragen über das bestimmte Paket mit der Anzeige der mit dem Paket verknüpften Daten vor der Übertragung von Informationen in der Informationsspeichervorrichtung zu einem anderen Rechner (40, 45) zu reagieren.

2. System nach Anspruch 1, das weiterhin ein bei einer Paketauslieferungsfirma befindliches Zentralrechnersystem (45) umfaßt und wobei die tragbare Dateneingabevorrichtung (12) weiterhin ein Modem (22) zum Übertragen von das bestimmte Paket betreffenden Informationen zwischen der Informationsspeichervorrichtung (18) und dem Zentralrechnersystem (45) umfaßt, wobei das elektronische Paketverfolgungssystem weiterhin dadurch gekennzeichnet ist, daß der Prozessor (17) ausgelegt ist, auf über den Schirm (14) eingegebene Anfragen über das bestimmte Paket mit dem Einleiten von Kommunikation mit dem Zentralrechnersystem (45) über das Modem (22) und mit der Anzeige von mit dem Paket verknüpften, in dem Zentralrechnersystem (45) gespeicherten Daten zu reagieren.
3. System nach Anspruch 1, bei dem der Prozessor (17) ausgelegt ist, um auf die Anfragen zu reagieren, die nach Name des Empfängers, nach dem Datum, nach einer Paketverfolgungsnummer oder nach dem Ziel gestellt werden.



4. Verfahren zum Verfolgen eines Pakets durch eine Organisation, das folgende Schritte umfaßt:

Eingabe von Paketverfolgungsdaten in eine intelligente handgehaltene tragbare Dateneingabe- und Datenverarbeitungsvorrichtung (12), die folgendes enthält:

ein in einem Lesestift untergebrachtes Strichcodelesegerät (25);  
einen Dateneingabe- und Displayschirm (14), der durch Kontakt mit ihm eingegebene Informationen, einschließlich Unterschriftsinformationen, empfangen kann;  
eine Informationsspeichervorrichtung (18);  
eine Datenübertragungsvorrichtung (20); und  
einen mit dem Lesegerät (25), dem Schirm (14), der Speichervorrichtung (18) und der Datenübertragungsvorrichtung (20) verbundenen Prozessor (17);  
wobei der Prozessor (17) ausgelegt ist, um ein bestimmtes Paket betreffende Paketverfolgungsdaten zuzuordnen und in der Informationsspeichervorrichtung (18) zu speichern, und wobei der Schritt der Eingabe von Paketverfolgungsdaten die Eingabe auch von von dem Lesegerät (25) gelesenen Strichcodeinformationen, von dem Schirm (14) erfaßten Unterschriftsinformationen und von dem Schirm (14) erfaßten, eingetippten Informationen beinhaltet;

wobei das Verfahren gekennzeichnet ist durch:

die Eingabe von Anfragen über das bestimmte Paket über den Schirm (14) nach der Eingabe der Paketverfolgungsdaten und  
als Antwort auf über den Schirm (14) eingegebene Anfragen über das bestimmte Paket, das Anzeigen der Paketverfolgungsdaten vor der Übertragung von Informationen in der Informationsspeichervorrichtung (18) zu einem anderen Rechner (40, 45).

5. Verfahren nach Anspruch 4, bei dem die tragbare Dateneingabevorrichtung (12) weiterhin ein Modem (22) zum Übertragen von das bestimmte Paket betreffenden Informationen zwischen der Informationsspeichervorrichtung und einem Zentralrechnersystem (45) enthält, wobei das Verfahren zum Verfolgen eines Pakets weiterhin gekennzeichnet ist durch die Eingabe von über den Schirm (14) eingegebenen Anfragen über das bestimmte Paket, Einleiten von Kommunikation mit dem Zentralrechnersystem (45) über das Modem (22) und Anzeige von in dem Zentralrechnersystem (45) gespeicherten und von diesem empfangenen, dem Paket zugeordneten Paketverfolgungsdaten.

6. Verfahren nach Anspruch 4, bei dem die über den Schirm (14) eingegebenen Anfragen Anfragen umfassen, die nach Name des Empfängers, nach dem Datum, nach einer Paketverfolgungsnummer oder nach dem Ziel gestellt werden.

## Revendications

1. Système de repérage électronique de paquet destiné à être utilisé par une organisation, comprenant:  
un dispositif (12) d'entrée de données et de traitement de données, portable, pouvant être tenu à la main, intelligent, comprenant:

un lecteur (25) de code barre monté sur un stylo;  
un écran (14) d'entrée et d'affichage de données capable de recevoir une information entrée par contact avec l'écran, comprenant une information de signature;  
un dispositif (18) de stockage d'information;  
un dispositif (20) de transfert de données; et  
un processeur (17) connecté audit lecteur (25), audit écran (14), audit dispositif de stockage (18) et audit dispositif de transfert de données (20);  
ledit processeur (17) étant configuré de façon à associer et stocker dans ledit dispositif (18) de stockage d'information les données relatives à un paquet particulier, comprenant une information de code barre lue par ledit lecteur (25), une information de signature acquise par ledit écran (14), et une information codée acquise par ledit écran (14),

ledit système de repérage électronique de paquet étant caractérisé en ce :

ledit écran (14) d'entrée et d'affichage de données est capable d'afficher une information entrée par contact avec l'écran; et  
ledit processeur (17) est configuré de façon à répondre à des interrogations relatives audit paquet particulier entrées via ledit écran (14), en affichant lesdites données associées audit paquet, avant de transférer une information dans ledit dispositif de stockage d'information en direction d'un autre ordinateur (40, 45).

2. Système selon la revendication 1, comprenant en outre un système d'ordinateur central (45) situé dans une compagnie de distribution de paquet; et dans lequel ledit dispositif (12) d'entrée de données portable comprend en outre un modem (22) pour transférer l'information relative audit paquet particulier entre ledit dispositif de stockage d'information (18) et ledit système d'ordinateur central (45), ledit

système de repérage électronique de paquet étant en outre caractérisé en ce que ledit processeur (17) est configuré de façon à répondre à des questions relatives audit paquet particulier entrées via ledit écran (14), en initiant une communication avec ledit système d'ordinateur central (45) via ledit modem (22), et en affichant les données associées audit paquet stockées dans ledit système d'ordinateur central (45).

3. Système selon la revendication 1, dans lequel ledit processeur (17) est configuré de façon à répondre auxdites interrogations faites par le nom du destinataire, par la date, par un nombre de repérage du paquet ou par la destination.
4. Procédé de repérage d'un paquet par une organisation comprenant les étapes consistant à :  
 entrer une donnée de repérage de paquet dans un dispositif (12) d'entrée de données et de traitement de données, portable, pouvant être tenu à la main, intelligent, comprenant:

un lecteur (25) de code barre monté sur un stylo;

un écran (14) d'entrée et d'affichage de données susceptible de recevoir une information entrée par contact avec l'écran, comprenant une information de signature;

un dispositif (18) de stockage d'information;

un dispositif (20) de transfert de données; et

un processeur (17) connecté audit lecteur (25), audit écran (14), audit dispositif de stockage (18) et audit dispositif de transfert de données (20);

ledit processeur (17) étant configuré de façon à associer et stocker dans ledit dispositif de stockage d'information (18) des données de repérage de paquet relatives à un paquet particulier, et dans lequel l'étape d'entrée des données de repérage de paquet comprend l'entrée d'inclure une information de code barre lue par ledit lecteur (25), une information de signature acquise par ledit écran (14), et une information codée acquise par ledit écran (14),

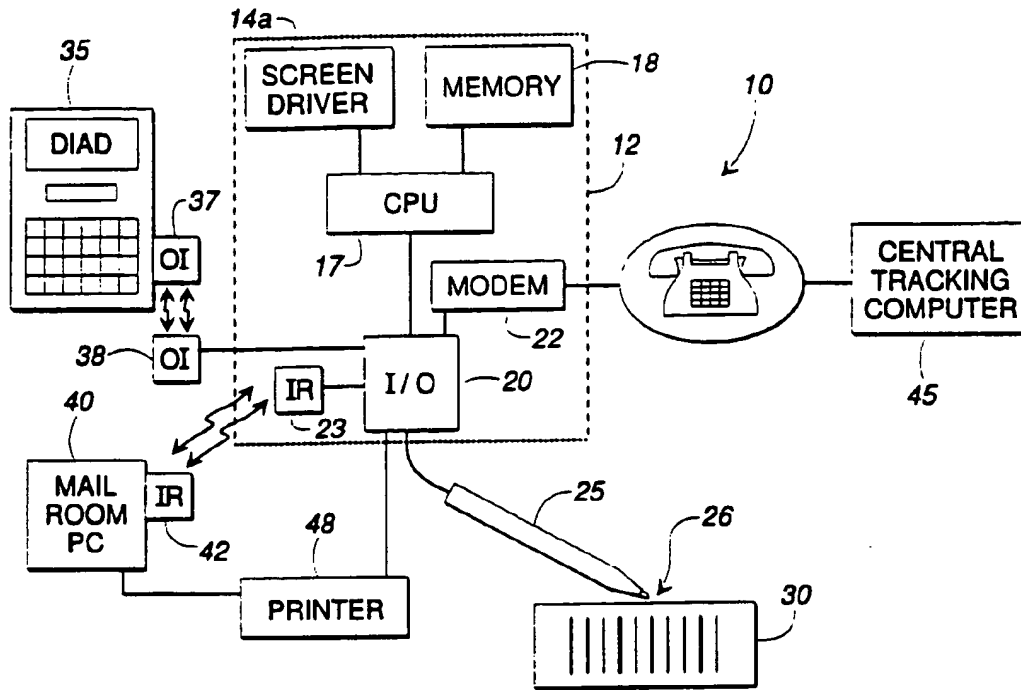
ledit procédé étant caractérisé par le fait que :

on entre des interrogations relatives audit paquet particulier via ledit écran (14), après avoir entré lesdites données de repérage du paquet et,

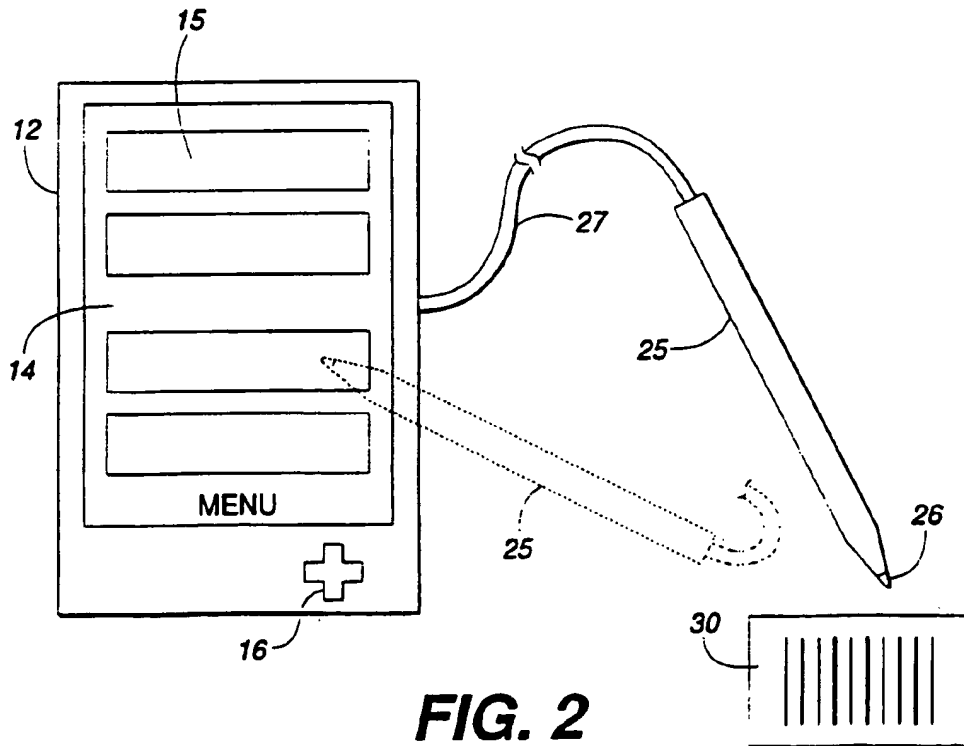
en réponse aux interrogations relatives audit paquet particulier entrées via ledit écran (14), on affiche lesdites données de repérage de paquet, avant de transférer l'information dans ledit dispositif (18) de stockage d'information en direction d'un autre ordinateur (40, 45).

5. Procédé selon la revendication 4, dans lequel ledit dispositif (12) d'entrée de données portable comprend en outre un modem (22) pour transférer l'information relative audit paquet particulier entre ledit dispositif de stockage d'information et un système d'ordinateur central (45), ledit procédé de repérage d'un paquet étant en outre caractérisé par le fait qu'on entre des interrogations relatives audit paquet particulier entrées via ledit écran (14), on initie une communication avec ledit système d'ordinateur central (45) via ledit modem (22), et l'on affiche les données de repérage de paquet associées audit paquet stockées dans ledit système d'ordinateur central (45) et reçues de lui.

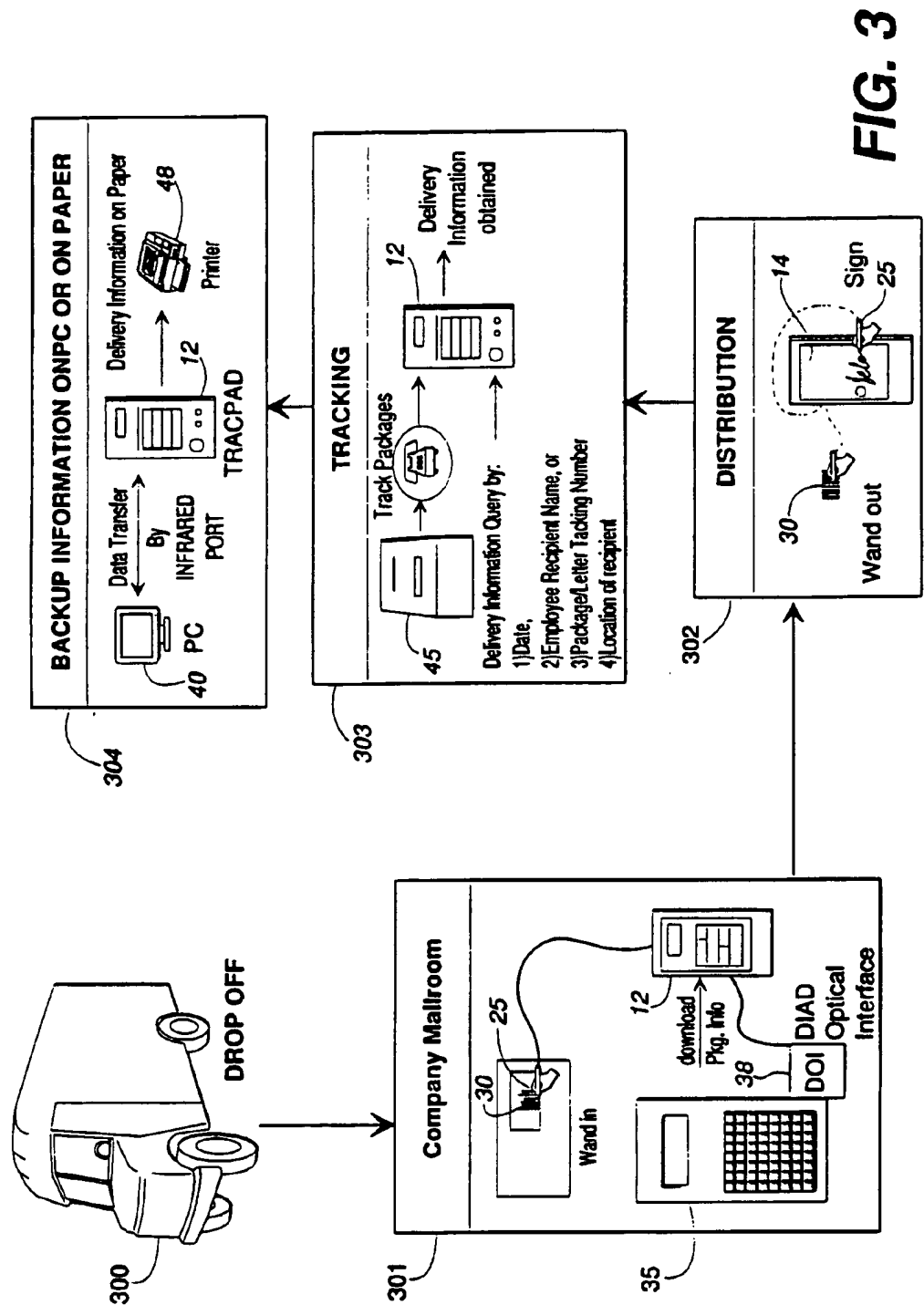
6. Procédé selon la revendication 4, dans lequel lesdites interrogations entrées via ledit écran (14) comprennent des interrogations faites par le nom du destinataire, par la date, par un nombre de repérage du paquet ou par la destination.



**FIG. 1**



**FIG. 2**



United Parcel Service  
Research & Development  
Danbury, Connecticut 06810

**TRACKPAD**

Signature Capture Device for  
Tracking Customer Delivery Information

CHECK IN

CHECK OUT

TRACK PACKAGES

UTILITIES

UNIT NO: 0000009  
Unit Location: xxxxxxxxxx

**FIG. 4A**

Select Type of Input

SCANNER INPUT

DIAD INPUT

Exit Menu

**FIG. 4B**

Scan in any new packages

Tap here when finished.

Ready to scan packages.

Tracking Number:

Date And Time Checked In:

**FIG. 4C**

Scan in any new packages

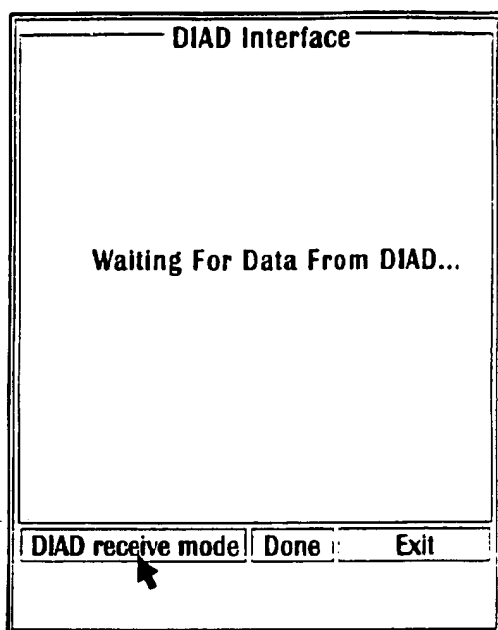
Tap here when finished.

Package Successfully Checked In

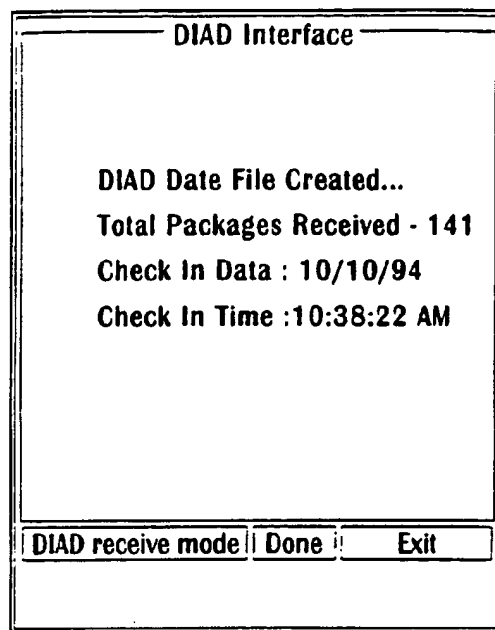
Tracking Number:  
1Z07000ED202437349

Date And Time Checked In:  
8/18/94 - 1:01:29 PM

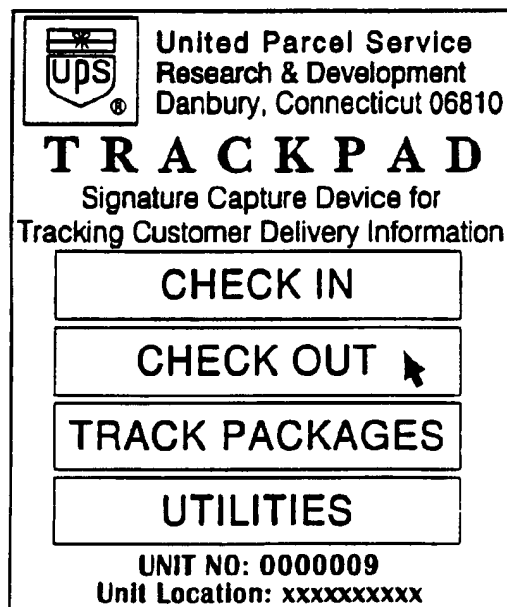
**FIG. 4D**



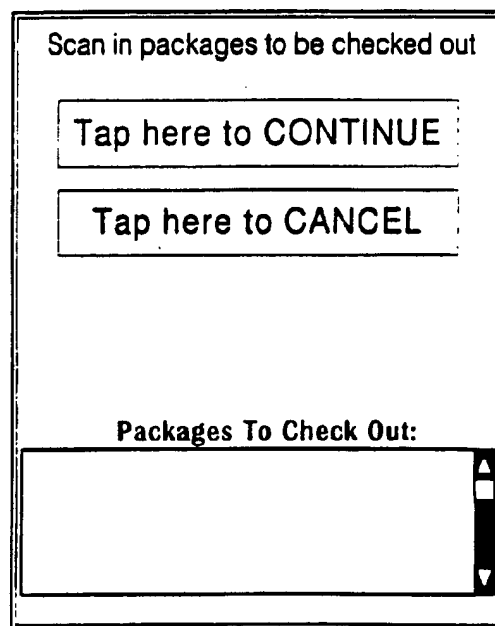
**FIG. 4E**



**FIG. 4F**



**FIG. 5A**



**FIG. 5B**

Scan in packages to be checked out

Tap here to CONTINUE

Tap here to CANCEL

Package Added Successfully.

Packages To Check Out:

1207000ED102650119 - 10/10/94 - 11:24
03450568741 - 10/10/94 - 11:24:31 AM

**FIG. 5C**

PLEASE ENTER RECIPIENT'S NAME

Tap here to CONTINUE

Tap here to CANCEL

RECIPIENT'S NAME:

First Name JOHN

Last Name DOE

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P
A	S	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	'
Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	.	.	.
Clear	Space/						←		

**FIG. 5D**

Select Recipient's Address

Tap here to CONTINUE

Tap here to CANCEL

Selected Recipient's Address

2nd Flr, Data Entry Automation

Choice of On-Site Addresses

1st Flr, Cafeteria
1st Flr, Package Lab.
1st Flr, Reception
1st Flr, System Administration
1st Flr, Systems Lab
1st Flr, Loading/Unloading Dock
1st Flr, Billing
2nd Flr, Data Entry Automation
2nd Flr, Finance & Accounting
2nd Flr, General Administration
2nd Flr, Human Resources
None from Above

**FIG. 5E**

Please Sign & Confirm

Tap here to CONTINUE

Tap here to CANCEL

Recipient's Name

JOHN DOE

Recipient's Location

2nd Flr, Data Entry

Packages Checked Out:

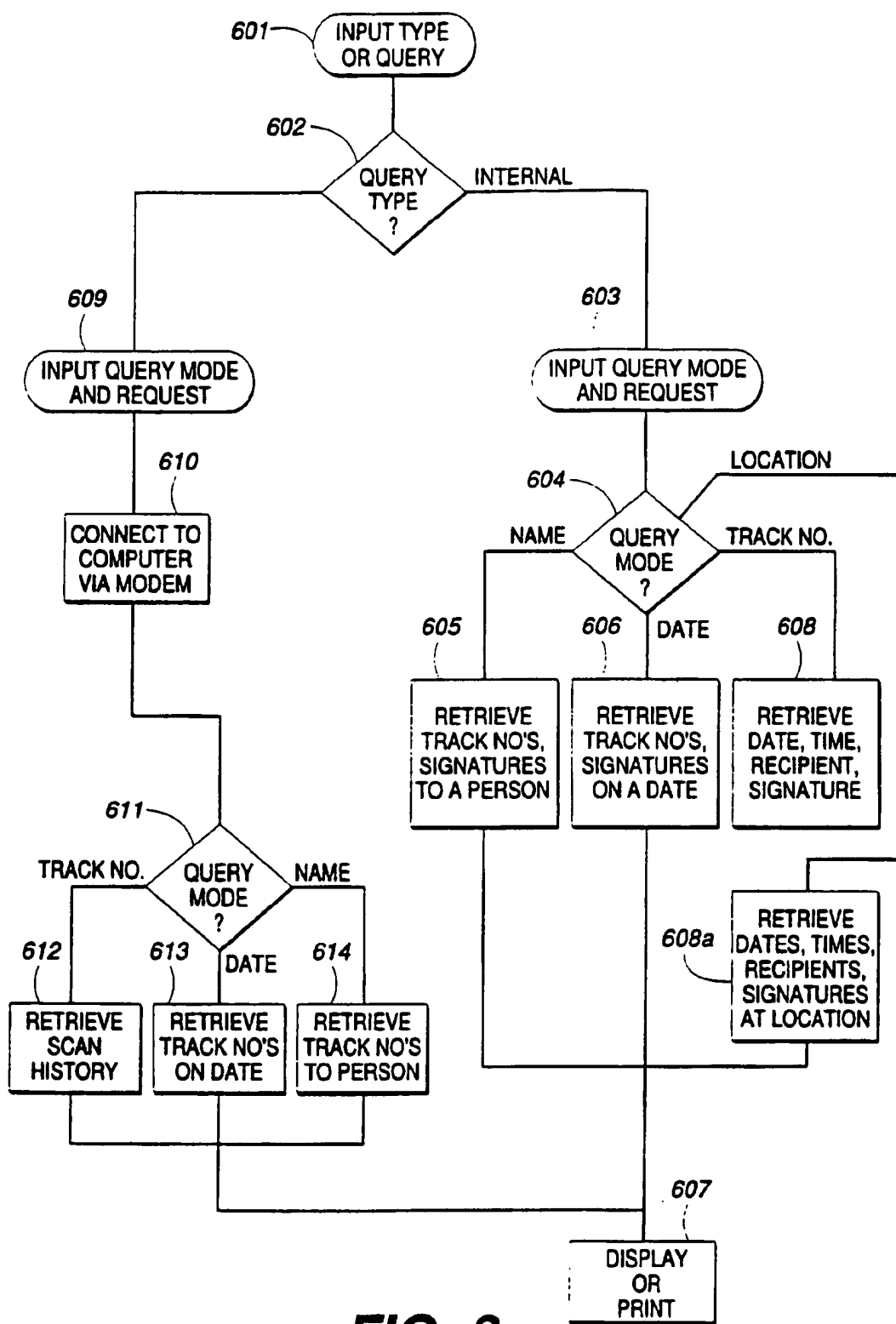
1207000ED102650119 - 10/10/94 - 11:2
03450568741 - 10/10/94 - 11:24:31 AM

Tap here to CLEAR/RE-DO signature


Please Sign Below

John Doe

**FIG. 5F**

**FIG. 6**



 United Parcel Service  
Research & Development  
Danbury, Connecticut 06810

# TRACKPAD

Signature Capture Device for  
Tracking Customer Delivery Information

CHECK IN

CHECK OUT

TRACK PACKAGES

UTILITIES

UNIT NO: 0000009  
Unit Location: xxxxxxxxxx

**FIG. 7A**

— TotalTrack Menu —

TOTALTRACK

Internal Deliveries

EXIT TRACKING

**FIG. 7B**

SELECT QUERY MODE:

☐ By Data m: 7 d: 22 y: 94

☐ By Last Name

☐ By Trk.No. (Last 3)

☐ By Location None Selected

QUERY EXIT QUERY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P
A	S	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	'
Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	,	.	

Clear Space/ ←

**FIG. 7C**

Please Select Recipient's Address

Tap here to CONTINUE

Tap here to CANCEL

Selected Recipient's Address  
2nd Flr. Data Entry Automation

Choice of On-Site Addresses

- 1st Flr. Cafeteria
- 1st Flr. Package Lab.
- 1st Flr. Reception
- 1st Flr. System Administration
- 1st Flr. Systems Lab
- 1st Flr. Loading/Unloading Dock
- 1st Flr. Billing
- 2nd Flr. Data Entry Automation**
- 2nd Flr. Finance & Accounting
- 2nd Flr. General Administration
- 2nd Flr. Human Resources
- None from Above



**FIG. 7D**

<b>Daily Delivery Record</b>	
United Parcel Service Research & Development TracPad v1.10	
<b>Daily Delivery Record</b>	
Site: RnD Date: 8/18/94    Time: 1:16:48 PM	
1) List of Packages: 1ZE263680100001343 13190190365 13190190301 13190190276  Signed out on 7/22/94 at 10:41:10 AM Signed out by: HAIDAI	
2) List of Packages: 13190190310 13190190294  Signed out on 7/22/94 at 4:32:05 PM Signed out by: ANNE ALLEN	
<input type="button" value="Print"/>	<input type="button" value="FAX"/> <input type="button" value="Continue"/>

**FIG. 7E**

<b>Enter Tracking Number</b>																																																		
1Z07000ED202437367																																																		
<input type="button" value="GO"/>	<input type="button" value="Exit"/>																																																	
Signed out on 7/22/94 at 10:41:40 AM Signed out by: ALEXANDER KACHEVSKY																																																		
<table border="1"> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr><td>Q</td><td>W</td><td>E</td><td>R</td><td>T</td><td>Y</td><td>U</td><td>I</td><td>O</td><td>P</td></tr> <tr><td>A</td><td>S</td><td>D</td><td>F</td><td>G</td><td>H</td><td>J</td><td>K</td><td>L</td><td>'</td></tr> <tr><td>Z</td><td>X</td><td>C</td><td>V</td><td>B</td><td>N</td><td>M</td><td>,</td><td>.</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td><input type="button" value="Clear"/></td> <td align="center" colspan="6"><input type="button" value="Space/"/></td> <td align="center" colspan="2"><input type="button" value="←"/></td> </tr> </table>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P	A	S	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	'	Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	,	.		<input type="button" value="Clear"/>	<input type="button" value="Space/"/>						<input type="button" value="←"/>	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0																																									
Q	W	E	R	T	Y	U	I	O	P																																									
A	S	D	F	G	H	J	K	L	'																																									
Z	X	C	V	B	N	M	,	.																																										
<input type="button" value="Clear"/>	<input type="button" value="Space/"/>						<input type="button" value="←"/>																																											

**FIG. 7F**

	United Parcel Service Research & Development Danbury, Connecticut 06810
<b>TRACKPAD</b>	
Signature Capture Device for Tracking Customer Delivery Information	
<input type="button" value="CHECK IN"/>	
<input type="button" value="CHECK OUT"/>	
<input type="button" value="TRACK PACKAGES"/>	
<input type="button" value="UTILITIES"/> 	
UNIT NO: 0000009 Unit Location: xxxxxxxxxx	

**FIG. 8A**

<b>UTILITIES MENU</b>	
<input type="button" value="Management Reports"/>	
<input type="button" value="Site Configuration"/>	
<input type="button" value="Call Management"/>	
<input type="button" value="DB Maintenance"/>	
<input type="button" value="Exit Utilities"/>	

**FIG. 8B**

**Management Reports**

**Call Mgmt. Report**

**Daily Excpt. Report**

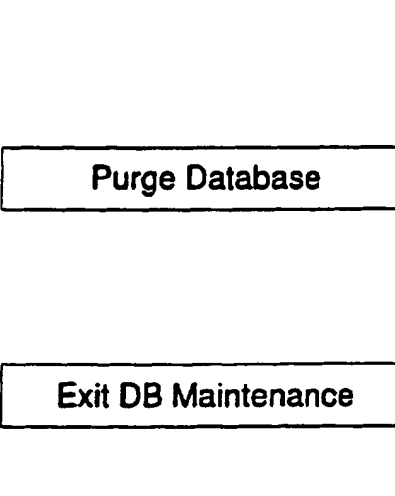
**Weekly Excpt. Report**

**Exit Mgmt. Reports**

**FIG. 8C**

Configuration		
Site Information		
ID:	RnD	
Address:	5153 Kenosia Ave. Danbury CT 06810	
Phone Numbers		
Host:	2037316389	
FAX:	2037316340	
Devices		
<input type="checkbox"/> Wand	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Modem	<input type="checkbox"/> Printer
<input type="button" value="Exit Configuration"/>		

**FIG. 8D**



The screenshot shows a black and white terminal window with a title bar that reads "Database Maintenance". Inside the window, there are two rectangular buttons. The top button is labeled "Purge Database" and the bottom button is labeled "Exit DB Maintenance".

**Database Maintenance**

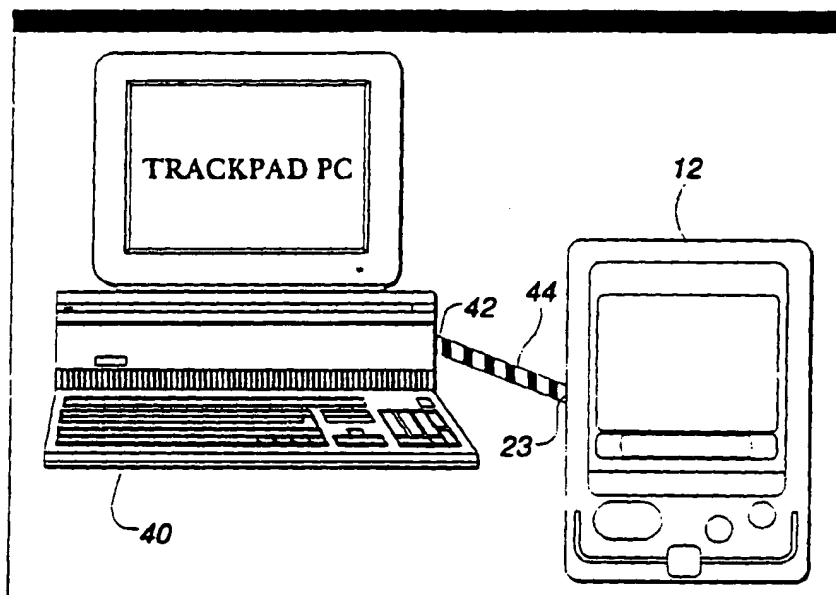
**Purge Database**

**Exit DB Maintenance**

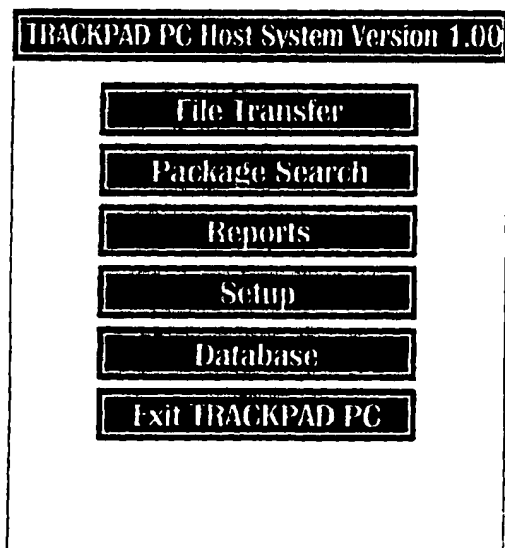
**FIG. 8E**

Sort By	Tracking Number	
Tracking Number	<input type="checkbox"/> Checking In Date & Time <input type="checkbox"/> Checking Out Date & Time <input type="checkbox"/> Shipper <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracking Number <input type="checkbox"/> Service <input type="checkbox"/> Status	Time
1939362	Tracking Number	17:57:0
1939362	Service	17:57:0
1939362	Status	17:57:0
19393629385		10/05/94 17:57:0
19393629387		10/05/94 17:57:0
19393629403		10/05/94 17:57:0
19393629421		10/05/94 17:57:0
19393629430		10/05/94 17:57:0
120500580100032116		10/05/94 17:57:0
121968231302300383		10/05/94 17:57:0
121968231302300392		10/05/94 17:57:0
121968231302300409		10/05/94 17:57:0
121968231302300418		10/05/94 17:57:0
121968231302300427		10/05/94 17:57:0
121968231302300436		10/05/94 17:57:0
121968231302300445		10/05/94 17:57:0
121968231302300463		10/05/94 17:57:0
121968231302300481		10/05/94 17:57:0

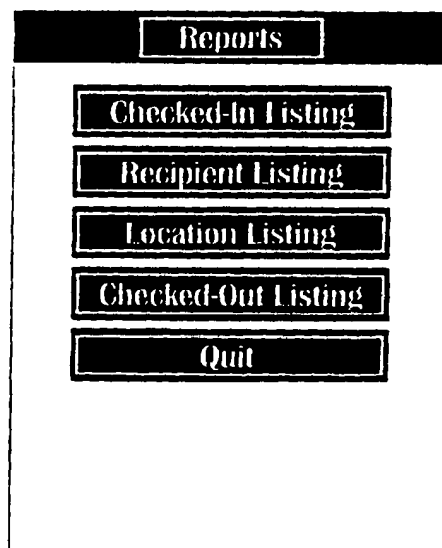
**FIG. 8F**



**FIG. 9B**



**FIG. 9A**



**FIG. 10A**

THE ABC COMPANY 1032 INDUSTRY DRIVE, NOWHERESVILLE, CA 30328				PAGE 2	
PRESS ANY KEY FOR NEXT PAGE					
DATE IN TIME IN	TRACKING #	DATE OUT TIME OUT	RECIPIENT LOCATION	SIGNATURE	
10/06/94 11:06	13150190338	10/06/94 11:07	SOMERS, JEROME 1ST FLR, SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION	<i>Jerome Somers</i>	
10/06/94 14:54	121968231302301382	10/06/94 14:56	SMITH, JOHN 2ND FLR, DATA ENTRY AUTOMATION	<i>John Smith</i>	
10/06/94 14:54	121968231302301408	10/06/94 14:57	JOHNSON, BILL 2ND FLR, HUMAN RESOURCES	<i>Bill Johnson</i>	
10/06/94 14:54	121968231302301391	10/06/94 14:57			
10/06/94 14:54	121968231302301417	10/06/94 14:58	RODGERS, JANICE 1ST FLR, RECEPTION	<i>Janice Rodgers</i>	
10/06/94 14:54	121968231302301435	10/06/94 15:00	ZIMMERMAN, MEGAN 2ND FLR, BILLING	<i>Megan Zimmerman</i>	
10/06/94 14:54	121968231302301426	10/06/94 15:00			
10/06/94 14:54	121968231302301453	10/06/94 15:01	WRIGHT, JEFF 2ND FLR, FINANCE & ACCOUNTING	<i>Jeff Wright</i>	
10/06/94 14:54	121968231302301444	10/06/94 15:01			
10/06/94 14:54	121968231302301462	10/06/94 15:02	O'BRIEN, PAT 1ST FLR, LOADING/UNLOADING DOCK	<i>Pat O'Brien</i>	
10/06/94 14:55	121968231302301471	10/06/94 15:02			
10/06/94 14:55	121968231302301480	10/06/94 15:07	TREBLUS, HERMAN 2ND FLR, GENERAL ADMINISTRATION	<i>Herman Treblus</i>	
10/06/94 14:55	121968231302301498	10/06/94 15:07			
10/06/94 14:55	121968231302301347	10/06/94 15:08	ECHOLEM, JOE 2ND FLR, HUMAN RESOURCES	<i>Joe Echolem</i>	
10/06/94 14:55	121968231302301356	10/06/94 15:08			

FIG. 10B